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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

BIOGRAPHY AND SELECTIONS
FROM HIS WRITINGS

WRITTEN ESPECIALLY

FOR SCHOOL READING

BY
THOMAS ARKLE CLARK
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Illustrated

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Contents.

Biography of Benjamin Franklin	347-362
Selections from Franklin	363-378
How Franklin Learned to Write Good English ..	363
The Man with an Ax to Grind	365
How to Make Conversation More Pleasant	367
The Whistle	369
Poor Richard's Sayings	371
Letter from Franklin to Samuel Mather	377

Illustrations:—

Picture of Benjamin Franklin	347
Franklin's Birthplace	352
The Hospital Which Franklin Helped to Establish..	358

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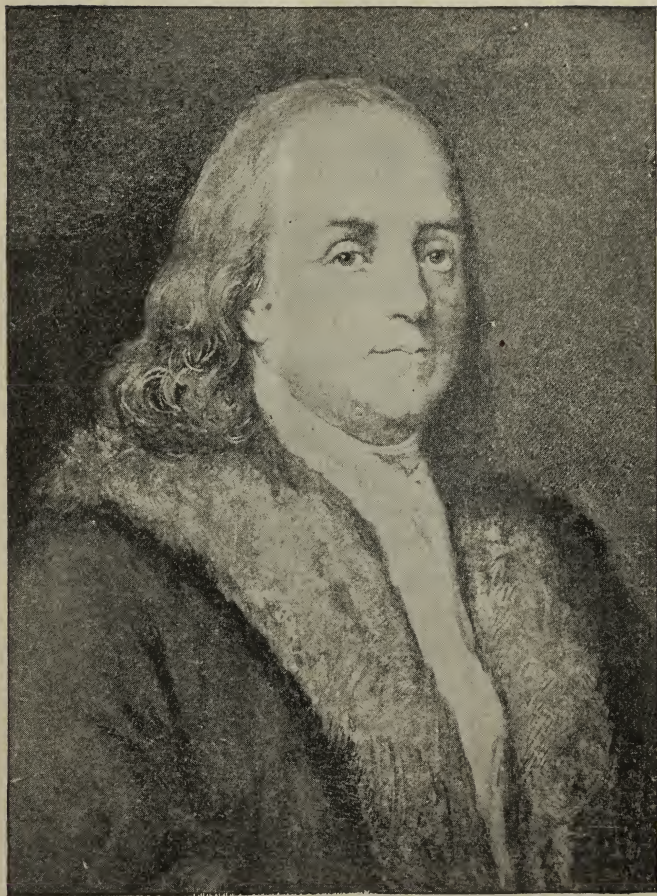
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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.
1706—1790.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Many of the great men of our country have been born in very humble circumstances, a fact that is true of Benjamin Franklin. Josiah Franklin, his father, was an Englishman who

made his living by dyeing clothes. Josiah Franklin did not wish to worship in the Church of England, and so, about 1685, with his wife and three little children, he came to America to find religious freedom and settled in Boston. Finding no use for his trade here as a dyer, he began to sell tallow candles which were everywhere then used for light. His first wife brought him seven children and his second wife, Abiah Folger, brought him ten, Benjamin being her youngest son.

In a plain little house on Milk street, in Boston, on January 6, 1706, Benjamin Franklin was born. He was the fifteenth of seventeen children, having two sisters younger than he was. All of his brothers were put to work to learn different trades, but Benjamin's early love of books and his readiness in learning to read induced his father to give him an education. He must have been different from most little boys that we know, for he says in his autobiography that he could not remember when he first learned to read. Franklin's father hoped to have him become a minister, and so at the age of eight years Benjamin was sent to the grammar school. Here he learned very rapidly, and by the end of the year he was advanced from the beginning class to the third class.

But Franklin's father soon found that with his limited means he could not give his son a college education; consequently Franklin was taken

from the grammar school and sent to a school for writing and arithmetic, kept by Mr. George Brownwell. Josiah Franklin was a man of good judgment and common sense, and when he found that he could not educate his son as he wished, he tried at least to give him a practical training in ordinary affairs. Franklin soon learned to write a good hand under his new master, but he failed almost entirely in arithmetic. At the age of ten he was taken from this school and set to work running errands, cutting wicks and filling candle moulds in his father's shop. Nowadays most boys and girls go to school for several years; Franklin had but little over two years of training in school.

But he did not like the business of making candles, and he caused his father much uneasiness by his fondness for ships and sailors. One of his brothers ran away to sea and Josiah Franklin was afraid that his youngest son would also leave him in this way. He tried in every way to find what the natural turn of Franklin's mind was, so that he might help him to get started in some trade, and so took him on long walks with him through the streets, among the tanners, bricklayers, and other workmen. Benjamin had a natural liking for tools of all sorts, and so his father decided that he should become a maker of knives. He was then sent to learn the cutler's trade with a cousin who had lately come to Boston from London, but the fee for

learning was so large that his father was soon obliged to bring him back to the candle shop.

The two years that Franklin spent in his father's shop were not entirely occupied in the making of candles and the running of errands. His great love of reading grew upon him, and he read almost everything that he could lay his hands upon. His father's library was not large, and in fact there were not many books in all Boston, at that time. Among the books that he read eagerly were Bunyan's works in separate little volumes, Mather's *Essay to Do Good*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Defoe's *Essay on Projects*. After he had read and re-read *Pilgrim's Progress* he sold it, and adding to the proceeds a little money that he had hoarded up, he bought forty volumes of Burton's *Historical Collections*. This miscellaneous reading, he tells us, in his autobiography, gave him a turn of thinking that had an influence upon some of the principal future events of his life.

When he was about twelve years old, Franklin signed the papers that were to bind him as an apprentice in printing until he was twenty-one years old, to his brother who had lately opened a printing office in Boston. He soon made himself useful about the office, and employed all his spare moments in reading and in practicing in composition. Being on good terms with an apprentice of one of the Boston booksellers, Franklin would borrow books after the

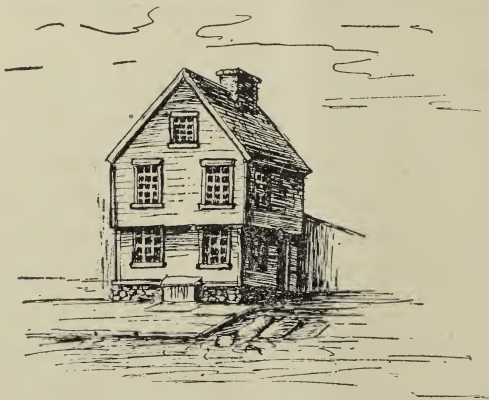
closing of the shops in the evening and sit up at night to read them and then return them in the morning. He always kept the books neat and clean so that their owner never knew that they had been out of the shop. This was perhaps not a very honorable thing to do, but it shows how anxious the boy was to learn. He became much interested in the essays of Addison and Steele in *The Spectator*, and practiced writing by re-producing the thoughts which he found in them.

In the course of his reading he ran across a treatise recommending a vegetable diet, and he at once resolved to quit eating meat and to board himself. For some time he prepared his own meals of potatoes, rice, bread, cookies and raisins, and saved money with which to buy more books.

When Franklin was about sixteen years old, his brother established the *New England Courant*, the fourth newspaper that appeared in America. Franklin helped to compose the type and to print the paper and then carried the sheets to the customers. A number of learned men who were interested in the success of the paper, often wrote things for it and judged the articles of other writers. Franklin, knowing that the judges would not think him capable of writing, secretly wrote an article for the paper and slipped it under the door of the printing office at night. The next day, while at work

setting type in the office, he heard the learned men read and praise his article and recommend that it be printed in the paper. This encouraged him so much that he kept on writing often, and several of his articles were printed before anyone knew that the printer's apprentice was their author.

Franklin's brother got into trouble with the Assembly over an article in *The Courant* and



FRANKLIN'S BIRTHPLACE.

was ordered to quit publishing the paper. Accordingly the paper was continued in the name of Benjamin Franklin and, in order to escape the censure of the Assembly, James Franklin gave up his younger brother's apprentice papers to him. New papers were made out and kept in private. Franklin had trouble with his brother and knowing that his brother would not dare to produce the new papers, he declared his freedom from apprenticeship. This action

he records in his autobiography as one of the first great errors of his life.

Escaping his father and brother who attempted to detain him, and selling his books to raise a little money, he set out for New York. Being unable to find work there, he made his way to Philadelphia, and the description of his arrival there, which he wrote himself many years afterward, is familiar perhaps to almost all the school children in America. With three rolls of bread in his hands, with a single dollar in cash, and with his pockets stuffed with extra shirts and stockings, the future author and philosopher walked down Market street in Philadelphia, while his future wife standing in her father's doorway, laughed at the sorry figure he cut, little thinking that she was sometime to be honored by his name.

He soon found work in Philadelphia with a printer named Keimer. He obtained lodging at the house of a Mr. Reed, his future father-in-law, and the acquaintance here formed with Miss Reed later resulted in love and marriage. Franklin's frugality and industry attracted the attention of many people, among them being Sir William Keith, Governor of the province, who advised the young man to start up in business for himself. So in the latter part of April, 1724, Franklin set out for Boston with a letter from the Governor to his father urging him to help Benjamin start a business in Philadelphia.

But Franklin's father thought the boy too young to manage a business of his own, and sent him back to Philadelphia with the promise of help when he became of age. The Governor then prepared to establish Franklin in business and to send him to London to buy materials for a printing office. It later turned out that the Governor had no money and no credit, and that he was simply a good-natured talker whose kindness of heart got the better of his judgment and good sense.

Having some faith in the Governor's project, however, Franklin decided to go on the journey, and, in the company of a friend, he arrived in London on December 24, 1724. The letters which he carried proved to be worthless so far as obtaining the materials for the printing office was concerned, and so he went to work at Palmer's, then a famous London printing house. During the eighteen months that he spent in London Franklin passed his time chiefly among the printers, trying to make enough money to pay his way home. On his journey to London he had formed a friendship with a Mr. Denham, a Quaker merchant. Mr. Denham liked the enterprise of the young man, and, when he had completed his business in London, he proposed to take Franklin back to Philadelphia with him as a clerk.

After his return to America, at the death of his employer, Mr. Denham, Franklin again

turned to the printing business and became the foreman of Keimer's shop. He did not get along amicably with his old employer, however, and in the spring of 1728, in partnership with a young Mr. Meredith, a former apprentice of Keimer's, he began business for himself and established "The New Printing Office in High Street near the Market". Franklin had before this helped to organize a club called the "Junto", made up of earnest, sensible men who were anxious to reach out for better things than they had around them, and they helped the young printers to get a start by bringing work to them. In September, 1729, Franklin and Meredith purchased the printing outfit of the bankrupt Keimer and started "The Pennsylvania Gazette". Franklin soon bought out his partner, and retained possession of the Gazette until 1740.

About the time of his purchase of the Gazette, Franklin resumed his visits to Miss Deborah Reed with whom he had long been on friendly terms. Their mutual affection, which existed before Franklin went to London in 1724, was revived and they were married on September 1, 1730. This proved to be a happy union, and Franklin tells us in his autobiography that his wife was always a good and faithful helpmate.

Franklin was a broad minded public spirited man, and the next fifteen years of his life show how he was actively engaged in the interests of his fellow men. True, he was at this time a

newspaper man, but he did not let this fact keep him from doing other things. In 1731 he was chiefly instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Library, the first of all the subscription libraries in our country. For this act alone he should be remembered as having performed a great service for his country. In 1732 he first published *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which is now well known and extracts from which are now perhaps to be found in every library in the United States. The Almanac was continued for twenty-five years, and into it Franklin put much of his homely wisdom and many of his now proverbial sayings about industry, frugality and thrift. "Father Abraham's Speech", published in the Almanac in 1758, established for Franklin almost a world-wide fame as a writer. The speech was widely circulated at the time of its first publication, and it has since been printed in almost all the languages of Europe. About the time of the first publication of *Poor Richard's Almanac* Franklin began the practice of what he called a project of arriving at moral perfection. He named the various virtues and the rules by which he was to acquire them, in a little book which he carried in his pocket and in which he kept a daily account of his actions. In 1743 Franklin drew up a proposal for establishing an academy in Philadelphia for the higher education of young men; in six years the academy was firmly established, and it later

became the foundation of the University of Pennsylvania. In 1744 he organized a philosophical society, and in 1751 he was instrumental in establishing a hospital which was one of the first of its kind in America. He also prevailed upon the Quaker Assembly to pass a militia law and to provide for the defense of the province. All of these various schemes were unselfish movements on Franklin's part for the good of the people, and his plans usually succeeded from the fact that he was always ready with his pen and that he made liberal use of newspapers and pamphlets by which to present his ideas to the people.

But he was not only occupied with reforms and with organization of charitable and educational institutions; his genius was also centered in inventions. In 1742 he invented the open stove which bears his name and about this time began his studies in electricity, which alone have made his name famous. Every school boy is familiar with the story of Franklin and his experiments in drawing lightning from the clouds. He was at first laughed at and ridiculed because he advanced the idea that lightning and electricity were one and the same, but people soon came to see the truth of Franklin's theories and to realize their importance. His various writings on electricity brought him further into view, and he was made a member of the Royal Society of London and presented

with the Copley gold medal. He was also given the degree of LL. D. by the Universities of Oxford, St. Andrews, and Edinburgh.

Franklin's long career of direct public service began when he was elected clerk of the General Assembly in 1736. In the following year he was made postmaster of Philadelphia, and he at once set about to reform the postal service. As



THE HOSPITAL WHICH FRANKLIN HELPED TO ESTABLISH.

a result mails were distributed more frequently, mailbags were opened to newspapers, postage was reduced, and unclaimed letters were first advertised in the newspapers. In 1753 he was appointed deputy postmaster-general of the colonies. About this time the final contest for supremacy in America between France and England had begun, and in 1754 Franklin was a commissioner from Pennsylvania to the congress at Albany in which he proposed a union of all the colonies under one government. Franklin's plan of union was rejected, but he always maintained that the colonies so united would

have been able to defend themselves without the English troops. When war broke out in earnest between France and England, however, Franklin did efficient service in procuring horses and wagons and various supplies for General Braddock's army, and gave liberally from his private means for the furtherance of the English cause.

In 1757 Franklin went to England as a representative of the province of Pennsylvania. The whole frontier of Pennsylvania was unprotected from the Indians and the public treasury was empty. In these straits the assembly of Pennsylvania laid a tax on various articles of trade, but did not tax the proprietors of the old Penn estate. Franklin's mission to England was to insist that these chartered proprietors should share with the other people of Pennsylvania the cost of defending the province from the Indians and others. He was successful in his mission, and he remained five years in London. It was during this visit that he received from the universities the honors that have already been mentioned.

He returned to Philadelphia in 1762 and for a short time retired from public life. It was not long, however, until his services were again called for, and in 1764 he again went to England, this time on a different mission. We are all familiar with the causes which led up to the Revolutionary War. The English Parliament insisted upon taxing the American colonies

without representation. The famous Stamp Act created great excitement among the colonists, and Franklin was sent to London as a commissioner by the assembly of Pennsylvania, and joined with other colonial agents in protesting against it. Franklin's action at this time was criticised freely in America, but history tells us that he was instrumental in the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766 and that he did much in his writings for the newspapers to help the American cause. The next few years he spent in earnestly endeavoring to avert a war with England, but the gulf between the mother country and the colonies grew wider and wider, and in 1775 Franklin decided that his personal safety as well as his patriotic devotion to his country demanded that he should return to America.

Immediately on his arrival home he was chosen a member of the Continental Congress and soon thereafter signed his name to the Declaration of Independence. The events that followed this declaration are familiar. On October 26, 1776, Franklin set sail for France in the interests of the colonies. His fame had gone before, and he was received with almost universal interest and respect, and his efforts were so effective that in February, 1778, he signed a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, between France and the United States. Franklin thus directly obtained for us the aid which the French people gave us in our great struggle for

freedom. He was then made minister plenipotentiary to the French king, and on September 3, 1783, he signed the treaty of peace which ended the Revolutionary War. He remained in France as a minister until 1785, when he returned home. His health was failing, and he felt that he could no longer perform the duties of his office.

But his people were not even yet ready to relieve him of public service, and almost immediately after his arrival in America he was elected President of the State of Pennsylvania, an office to which he was twice unanimously elected. While holding this office he was a delegate to the convention which framed the present constitution of the United States.

In 1788 Franklin retired to private life. But he was an old man, and the vigor of his long and useful life was gone. Yet in his very last days he was not idle, and almost his last deed was to sign a petition to Congress for the abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania. In April, 1790, he was stricken with pleurisy, and he died on the night of April 17, 1790. He was buried in the yard of Christ Church, Philadelphia, and a general mourning of two months was ordered by Congress as a tribute to his memory.

Franklin's forty years of public service must not make us forget that he was also a man of letters. No other man in America, perhaps, has attained to greatness in so many different

ways as Franklin. He was a philosopher, a scientist, a statesman and diplomat, and he was at all times a writer. Whatever the theory he wished to advance, whatever the cause he wished to help, his pen was ever his ready servant. Much that he wrote, from the fact that it was of current interest, has not come down to us. But the most notable works that he produced will live perhaps as long as the English language lives. His essays in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, and his *Autobiography*, will always entitle him to distinction in the domain of letters. The secret of excellence in his writing lies in his wonderful good sense and in his simplicity. He had something worth saying, something that was of interest to his fellow beings for the reason that it always concerned them in one way and another, and he said what he had in mind to say in simple, vigorous English. He was a great and noted man, but he was simple and unostentatious as a child, and his writings reveal his character. As a master of simple, effective English, he stands with the first among American writers.

THOMAS ARKLE CLARK,
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SELECTIONS FROM BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

HOW FRANKLIN LEARNED TO WRITE GOOD ENGLISH.

After some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads.

One was called *The Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake, with his two daughters; the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of Teach (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise.

This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one; but as prose writing has been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a

principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it.

With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse, and, after a time, when I had

pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again.

I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts.

By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language; and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer.

THE MAN WITH AN AX TO GRIND.

When I was a little boy, I remember, one cold winter's morning, I was accosted by a smiling man with an ax on his shoulder. "My pretty boy," said he, "has your father a grindstone?"

"Yes, sir," said I.

"You are a fine little fellow," said he. "Will you let me grind my ax on it?"

Pleased with the compliment of "fine little fellow," "Oh, yes sir," I answered. "It is down in the shop."

"And will you, my man," said he, patting me on the head, "get me a little hot water?"

How could I refuse? I ran, and soon brought a kettleful.

“How old are you?—and what’s your name?” continued he, without waiting for a reply. “I’m sure you are one of the finest lads that I have ever seen. Will you just turn a few minutes for me?”

Tickled with the flattery, like a little fool, I went to work, and bitterly did I rue the day. It was a new ax, and I toiled and tugged till I was almost tired to death. The school bell rang, and I could not get away. My hands were blistered, and the ax was not half ground.

At length, however, it was sharpened, and the man turned to me with, “Now, you little rascal, you’ve played truant! Scud to the school, or you’ll rue it!”

“Alas!” thought I, “it was hard enough to turn a grindstone this cold day, but now to be called a little rascal is too much.”

It sank deep into my mind, and often have I thought of it since. When I see a merchant over-polite to his customers, begging them to take a little brandy, and throwing his goods on the counter, thinks I, “That man has an ax to grind.”

When I see a man flattering the people, making great professions of attachment to liberty, who is in private life a tyrant, methinks, “Look out, good people! “That fellow would set you turning grindstones!”

When I see a man hoisted into office by party spirit, without a single qualification to render him either respectable or useful, “Alas!” methinks, “deluded people you are doomed for a season to turn the grindstone for a booby.”

HOW TO MAKE CONVERSATION MORE PLEASANT.

My list of virtues contained at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud,—that my pride showed itself frequently in conversation,—that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinced me by mentioning several instances,—I determined to endeavor to cure myself of this vice or folly: and I added Humility to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word.

I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the reality of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the appearance of it. I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others, and all positive assertion of my own.

I even forbade myself the use of every word or expression in the language that imparted a fixed opinion, such as “certainly” “undoubtedly,” etc.; and I adopted instead of them, “I conceive,” “I apprehend,” or “I imagine,” a

thing to be so or so; or it so “appears to me at present.”

When another asserted something that I thought an error, I denied myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that, in certain cases or circumstances, his opinion would be right, but in the present case there “appeared” or “seemed to me” some difference, etc.

I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner; the conversations I engaged in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I proposed my opinions procured them a readier reception, and less contradiction. I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong; and I more easily prevailed with others to give up their mistakes, and join with me, when I happened to be in the right.

This mode, which I at first put on with some violence to natural inclination, became at length so easy, and so habitual to me, that perhaps for the last fifty years no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me.

And to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing, that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions or alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I became a member; for I was

but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points.

In reality there is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself.

THE WHISTLE.

When I was a child seven years old my friends, on a holiday, filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly toward a shop where cheap toys were sold, but, being charmed with the sound of a whistle that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I impulsively gave him all my money for it. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my whistle, but disturbing all the family. My brothers and sisters and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times too much for it; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money, and laughed at me so much for my folly that I cried with vexation; and my reflections gave me more chagrin than the whistle gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterward of use to me,

the impression continuing on my mind, so that often when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing I said to myself, don't give too much for the whistle, and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, unwise persons who gave too much for their whistles.

When I saw a man too fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in politics, and neglecting his own affairs and ruining them by that neglect, he pays, indeed, said I, too much for his whistle.

If I knew a miser who gave up all of the comforts of life and all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, poor man, said I, you pay too much for your whistle.

When I met with a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind and of fortune, and ruining his health, mistaken man, said I, you are providing pain for yourself instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.

If I see a man fond of appearance, or of fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages for which he contracts debts, and perhaps ends his career in a prison, alas! say I, he pays dear, very dear, for his whistle.

POOR RICHARD'S SAYINGS.

Courteous Reader: I have heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by others. Judge, then, how much I must have been gratified by an incident I am going to relate to you.

I stopped my horse, lately, where a great number of people were collected at an auction of merchants' goods. The hour of the sale not being come, they were conversing on the badness of the times; and one of the company called to a plain, clean old man, with white locks: "Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the times? Will not these heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to do?"

Father Abraham stood up and replied: "If you would have my advice, I will give it to you in short; for 'a word to the wise is enough,' as Poor Richard says." They joined in desiring him to speak his mind, and, gathering around him, he proceeded as follows: "Friends," said he, "the taxes are indeed very heavy; and, if those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us.

"We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly; and of these taxes the

commissioners can not ease or deliver us by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice, and something may be done for us. 'Heaven helps them that help themselves', as Poor Richard says.

"It would be thought a hard government that should tax its people one tenth part of their time to be employed in its service; but idleness taxes many of us much more; sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life. 'Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears; while the used key is always bright,' as Poor Richard says. How much more than is necessary do we spend in sleep! forgetting that 'the sleeping fox catches no poultry,' and that there will be sleeping enough in the grave.

"'Lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough, always proves little enough.' Let us, then, be up and doing, and doing to the purpose; so by diligence shall we do more with less perplexity. 'Drive thy business, and let not that drive thee;' and 'early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,' as Poor Richard says.

"So, what signifies wishing and hoping for better times? We may make these times better if we bestir ourselves. 'Industry need not wish, and he that lives upon hopes will die fasting.' 'There are no gains without pains; then help hands, for I have no lands.' 'He that hath a trade, hath an estate; and he that hath a call-

ing, hath an office of profit and honor;’ but then the trade must be worked at, and the calling well followed, or neither the estate nor the office will enable us to pay our taxes. Work while it is called to-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered to-morrow. ‘One to-day is worth two to-morrows,’ as Poor Richard says; and further, ‘Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do to-day.’

“If you were a servant, would you not be ashamed that a good master should catch you idle? Are you, then, your own master? Be ashamed to catch yourself idle, when there is so much to be done for yourself, your family, and your country. It is true, there is much to be done, and perhaps you are weak-handed; but stick to it steadily, and you will see great effects; for ‘constant dropping wears away stones,’ and ‘little strokes fell great oaks.’

“I think I hear some of you say, ‘Must a man afford himself no leisure?’ I will tell you, my friends, what Poor Richard says: ‘Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain leisure; and since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour.’ Leisure is time for doing something useful; this leisure the diligent man will obtain, but the lazy man never; for ‘a life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things.’

“But with our industry we must likewise be steady, settled, and careful, and oversee our own affairs with our own eyes, and not trust too

much to others; for, as Poor Richard says, 'Three removes are as bad as a fire;' and again, 'Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee;' and again, 'If you would have your business done, go; if not, send;' and again, 'The eye of the master will do more work than both his hands;' and again, 'Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge.'

"A man's own care is profitable, for 'if you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself.' 'A little neglect may breed great mischief.' 'For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; and for want of a horse, the rider was lost,' being overtaken and slain by the enemy—all for want of a little care about a horse-shoe nail.

"So much for industry, my friends, and attention to one's own business; but to these we must add frugality, if we would make our industry more certainly successful. A man may, if he knows not how to save as he gets, keep his nose to the grindstone all his life, and die not worth a groat at last. 'If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as of getting.' 'The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her outgoes are greater than her incomes.'

"Away with your expensive follies, and you will not then have so much cause to complain of hard times, heavy taxes, and chargeable families; for 'what maintains one vice would

bring up two children.’ Beware of little expenses. ‘Many a little makes a mickle;’ ‘A small leak will sink a great ship.’ Here you are all got together at this sale of fineries and knickknacks. You call them goods, but, if you do not take care. they will prove evils to some of you.

“You expect they will be sold cheap, and perhaps they may be, for less than cost; but, if you have no occasion for them, they must be dear to you. Remember what Poor Richard says: ‘Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities.’ ‘Silks, satins, scarlet, and velvets put out the kitchen-fire.’ These are not the necessities of life; they can scarcely be called the conveniences; and yet, only because they look pretty, how many want to have them!

“By these and other extravagances, the greatest are reduced to poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they formerly despised, but who, through industry and frugality, have maintained their standing. ‘If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some; for he that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing;’ and, indeed, so does he that lends to such people, when he goes to get it again.

“It is as truly folly for the poor to ape the rich, as for the frog to swell in order to equal the ox. After all, this pride of appearance can not promote health, nor ease pain; it makes no

increase of merit in the person; it creates envy; it hastens misfortunes.

“But what madness it must be to run in debt for superfluities! Think what you do when you run in debt: you give to another power over your liberty. If you can not pay at the time, you will be ashamed to see your creditor: you will be in fear when you speak to him; you will make poor, pitiful, sneaking excuses, and by degrees come to lose your veracity, and sink into base, downright lying; for ‘the second vice is lying, the first is running in debt,’ as Poor Richard says; and again, ‘Lying rides upon debt’s back.’

“When you have got your bargain, you may perhaps think little of payment; but ‘creditors have better memories than debtors; creditors are a superstitious sect, great observers of days and times.’ If you bear your debt in mind, the term, which at first seemed so long, will, as it lessens, appear extremely short. ‘Those have a short Lent who owe money to be paid at Easter.’

“This doctrine, my friends, is reason and wisdom; but industry, and frugality, and prudence may all be blasted without the blessing of Heaven. Therefore ask that blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them.”

The old gentleman ended his harangue. The people heard it, and approved the doctrine, and immediately practiced the contrary, just as if it

had been a common sermon; for the auction opened, and they began to buy extravagantly. I found the good man had thoroughly studied my almanac, and digested all I had dropped on these topics during the course of twenty-five years. The frequent mention he made of me must have tired any one else; but my vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth part of the wisdom was my own which he ascribed to me, but rather the gleanings that I had made of the sense of all ages and nations.

However, I resolved to be the better for the echo of it; and, although I had at first determined to buy stuff for a new coat, I went away resolved to wear my old one a little longer. Reader, if thou wilt do the same, thy profit will be as great as mine. I am, as ever, thine to serve thee.

to sayings + tell what they mean
LETTER FROM FRANKLIN TO SAMUEL MATHER.

I received your kind letter, with your excellent advice to the people of the United States, which I read with great pleasure, and hope it will be duly regarded. Such writings, though they may be lightly passed over by many readers, yet, if they make a deep impression on one active mind in a hundred, the effects may be considerable. Permit me to mention one little instance, which though it relates to myself, will not be quite uninteresting to you. When I was a boy, I met with a book, entitled “Essays to do Good,” which I think was written by your

father. It had been so little regarded by a former possessor, that several leaves of it were torn out; but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a doer of good, than on any other kind of reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book.

You mention your being in your seventy-eighth year; I am in my seventy-ninth; we are grown old together. It is now more than sixty years since I left Boston, but I remember well both your father and grandfather, having heard them both in the pulpit and seen them in their houses. The last time I saw your father was in the beginning of 1724, when I visited him after my first trip to Pennsylvania. He received me in his library, and on my taking leave showed me a shorter way out of the house through a narrow passage, which was crossed by a beam overhead. We were still talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly towards him, when he said hastily, "Stoop, stoop!" I did not understand him, till I felt my head hit against the beam. He was a man that never missed any occasion of giving instruction, and upon this he said to me, "You are young, and have the world before you; stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps." This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of use to me; and I often think of it, when I see pride mortified, and misfortunes brought upon people by their carrying their heads too high. . . .

Passy, 12 May, 1784.

B. FRANKLIN.

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